CHAPTER II
National Setting and Local Evolution of the Winter Shows

The Morrill Act, signed into law by Abraham Lincoln in 1862, approximately 50 years before the first Farm Crops Show, was perhaps the most significant event in the history of American higher education. Going to college had been only for the wealthy and influential families. Few would dispute the importance of the access to higher education by the general public which the Land Grant University idea brought to the working people in each state. The commitment of service to all citizens of an entire state by such universities was what was different from private colleges. The close ties between the people of the state and its Land Grant University were developments that might not have been foreseen by Justin Morrill, the far-sighted author of the Morrill Act. This Land Grant idea was especially acceptable in the great Midwest. Farmers were quick to find the availability of highly trained researchers and educators on the staffs of the Land Grant Colleges.

The single most significant factor in the initial meeting of the farmers' Short Course was that the Land Grant University of the State of Minnesota was reaching out to the pioneering farmers in northwestern Minnesota. An Experiment Station and a School of Agriculture had been established to provide outreach education for those who were living on the farm and for those who were servicing farmers, and to engage in research which would assist those on the land with their production problems. This reaching out was part of the philosophical mission of the Land Grant University. The superintendent and staff of the Northwest School and Experiment Station provided leadership and expertise to launch the educational service of the Short Course and Farm Crops Show and to continue to provide ongoing stability and leadership for this new arm of the Land Grant College. They attempted to encourage and enliven organizations and create interest in the launching and the continuation of the Winter Shows. This leadership has varied through the years from too much University influence and effort to a leadership organized in a nonprofit service corporation representative of all major organizations, groups, and institutions in northwestern Minnesota. The service function of the University at Crookston continues and has been augmented greatly by another sector of the University, the agricultural extension service and homemaking education in each county.

Several names have been used as this midwinter exposition has traveled through the 75-year history. It began, patterned somewhat after the farm institutes that were being held in individual communities of southern Minnesota and North Dakota. The first show was called the Short Course and Farm Crops Show, and this title continued for some time. In 1918, the combined premium and program book was entitled "The Red River Valley Farm Crops Show and Northwestern Minnesota Farmers Week Meetings." In 1925, the program book and premium book was entitled "The Red River Valley Classic - The Red River Valley Winter Show." In 1928, the official program and premium book was called "The Northwest School Farmer's Week and the Red River Valley Winter Shows." This title lasted until 1969 when the name of the event became "The Red River Valley Winter Show and the Northwestern Minnesota Farmers Week," and this is the title used today.

Probably the changes are largely the result of University leadership through the years. In fact, up until the late 1940's the premium book as well as the program book were published by the Northwest School and Experiment Station as part of their service to the Red River Valley Winter Shows. In the late 1940's the board of managers...